

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

09/692,829

Examiner

Calvin L. Hewitt II

Applicant(s)

LINGLE ET AL.

Art Unit

3621

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to correspondence dated 5 January 2007.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 99-112.
3. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: _____.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
- (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
- 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413),
Paper No./Mail Date _____ |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08),
Paper No./Mail Date _____ | 7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Amendment/Comment |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit
of Biological Material | 8. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance |
| | 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Status of Claims

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Deidra Richardson 5 January 2007.

2. The Application has been amended as follows-
Claims 1-98 have been canceled.

99. (New) A method for generating meter refund indicia data, the method comprising:

providing a secure network between a postage value administrator and a postal service provider;

authenticating a user at a user computer by a server on the secure network, wherein the server comprises a database and a cryptographic module;

accessing meter refund withdrawal software executing on a user computer and transmitting to the server a request for a meter refund using the meter refund withdrawal software;

processing the meter refund request via a meter refund application executing on the secure network at a support personnel computer;

contacting the cryptographic module by the meter refund application;
calculating the meter refund by the cryptographic module;
generating indicia data for the calculated meter refund by the
cryptographic module by accessing meter refund information from the database;
transmitting the generated indicia data from a vault wherein the vault
comprises the server; and
printing the indicia including the indicia data.

100. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein processing the meter
refund request allows a meter administrator to initiate the meter refund.

101. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein processing the meter
refund request comprises generating reports including a withdrawal request
report and a withdrawn meters reports.

102. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein accessing the meter
refund withdrawal software executing on the user computer comprises accessing
a GUI to permit the user computer to interact with the server.

103. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein the indicia is printed to an
electronic file.

104. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein the indicia is printed to a
printer.

105. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for searching for a customer.

106. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for accessing a postage transaction history.

107. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for placing an administrative hold on an account.

108. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for accessing an e-mail history.

109. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for executing a file transfer status and file download.

110. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for executing a file transfer archive search.

111. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for uploading quality assurance envelopes.

112. (New) The method of claim 99, further comprising utilizing code for providing print error credits to a customer.

Reasons for Allowance

3. The present invention is directed to postage metering.

Network and PC-based metering systems are old and well known. In 1996, Pitney Bowes introduced an electronic postage meter that allows users to refill a postage meter by downloading postage over a network (Barbara Peppriell, Searcher, vol 7, n5, May 1999). Kara et al. (US 6,249,777) teach a system and method for remote postage metering where a user at a PC can request and receive, and subsequently print postage indicia ('777, column 6, lines 12-45). Requesting a refund for unused postage is also well-known. Liechti et al. (US 5,715,164) teach a user sending a refund request over a network and in response to the request a data center crediting the user's account ('164, column 9, lines 35-46). Lewis et al. (US 6,233,565) also teach meter refunds ('565, column 17, lines 40-67), while Pierce et al. (US 6,058,384) teach printing an indicia in the amount of refund ('384, column 6, lines 8-30). However, the prior art neither singly nor in combination, teaches or reasonably suggests processing a meter refund request via a meter refund application running on a secure network between a postage value administrator and a postal service provider, contacting a cryptographic module by the meter refund application, generating the indicia by the cryptographic module and transmitting the generated indicia data from a vault wherein the vault comprises the server and the server comprises the cryptographic module.

Conclusion

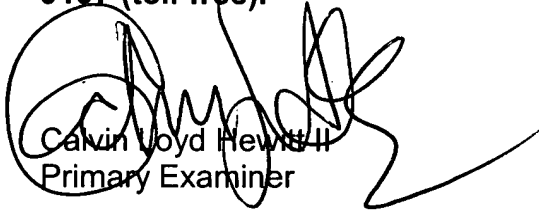
4. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure:
 - Peppriell, Barbara, "The Post Office Unveils the E-STAMP", Searcher, v7, n5, May 1999
 - Pierce et al. teach a secure method for refunding a postage meter
5. Any comments considered necessary by Applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."
6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Calvin Loyd Hewitt II whose telephone number is (571) 272-6709. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM-5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Andrew Fischer, can be reached at (571) 272-6779.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information

for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov/>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at **866-217-**

9197 (toll-free).



Calvin Lloyd Hewitt II
Primary Examiner

January 9, 2007